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Supporters of President Donald Trump gather in front of the U.S. Capitol Jan. 6, 2021, in Washington. (CNS/Reuters/Stephanie Keith)

by NCR Editorial Staff

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Shortly after 1 p.m. on Jan. 6, 2021, just as two Republicans were objecting to the certification of the presidential election results during a joint session of Congress, thousands of supporters of President Donald Trump began marching toward the Capitol from the White House, where Trump had encouraged them to "never give up" and "never concede." Some protesters had already arrived and stormed the outer police barrier around the Capitol.

Over the next five hours, the shocking scenes from the nation's capital would be compared to a those of a banana republic: lawmakers donning gas masks and barricading themselves in lockdown; rioters scaling the building, breaking the windows and destroying property once inside; tear gas sprayed and shots fired as police were trying to stop the encroaching mob. It took more than two hours for Trump to call in the National Guard to help quell the violence.

By the following day, five people had died from the attack, including one member of the Capitol Police. Four more officers who responded to the Capitol violence died by suicide in the following months.

Another casualty: the belief and trust that our democracy is invincible. Although Trump had been encouraging his supporters to try to overturn the election results since November, this violent attempt to stop the certification of a free and fair election could only be called an insurrection or a coup.

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Thankfully, it was not successful — this time. By late evening, with the rest of the city under a curfew, lawmakers reconvened and, at 3:42 a.m. Jan. 7, Vice President Mike Pence officially certified that Joe Biden would be the next president of the United States.

Pence, in reopening the Senate, called it "a dark day in the history of the United States Capitol." The Republican National Committee strongly condemned the violence. Even one of Trump's most loyal allies, Sen. Lindsey Graham, said, "Enough is enough."

The president of the U.S. bishops' conference, Los Angeles Archbishop José Gomez, also decried the violence. Washington Cardinal Wilton Gregory warned in a statement, "The divisive tone that has recently so dominated our national

conversations must change. Those who resort to inflammatory rhetoric must accept some responsibility for inciting the increasing violence in our nation."



Supporters of then-President Donald Trump join in prayer outside the U.S. Capitol Jan. 6, 2021, in Washington, where Congress was to meet in joint session to certify the Electoral College vote for then-President-elect Joe Biden. (CNS/Reuters/Mike Theiler)

In an editorial the next day, we acknowledged that while there was plenty of blame to go around for the events of Jan. 6, "Catholic apologists for Trump have blood on their hands." Although we do not know the religious affiliation of the more than 700 rioters who have so far been charged, it was clear by the Jesus flags next to the Confederate ones that day that white Christian nationalism motivated many of them. Catholics are not immune to this sin, and too often Catholic leaders, so-called media and influencers have fanned its flames.

We praise the House committee investigating the attack, especially Republican member Rep. Liz Cheney, who has paid a political price for speaking the truth about Jan. 6 and criticizing Trump. And we pray for peace on the anniversary of that horrible day.

Our editorial called for a confession of Catholics' complicity in the coup, but that, sadly, did not happen. Instead, right-wing Catholics have chosen politics over faith, with many continuing to support Trump and the lie that he won the election.

As Trump tweeted throughout the attack, he said one thing we agree with: "Remember this day forever!"

We must, so that it never happens again.

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